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# SOME CONFUSIONS IN PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

BY

Natalie Coffey

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BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE

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APPROVED:

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Major Professor

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Minor Professor

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Chairman of Committee of Graduate Instruction

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# SOME CONFUSIONS IN PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

## INTRODUCTION

### Aim of the Study

This study seeks to present the confusions arising in punctuation and capitalization, to find the causes for these confusions, and to present means of eliminating the difficulties. As a preparation for the actual investigation it will state the present status of punctuation and show the necessity for standards. It will also show how standards may be obtained. Having established these facts, it will set forth the marks most commonly employed today and the functions assigned to each.

As its real problem it will set forth the results of an investigation of two objective tests. In the first test an examination of incorrect reactions will show the consistency with which the same incorrect response is given to a certain situation. A comparison of the incorrect response with the correct one will reveal the cause of the confusion. The fact that there is a general tendency to react incorrectly to particular situations will be established by the checking of the specific results of one test with the general results in the other. A study of several of the most reliable tests and manuals will show whether or not the difficulty lies in the statement of the rule or in the confusion of one rule with another. Recommendations for remedying the present situation will close the discussion.

## Materials Used in the Investigation

### Tests

The two tests used in the investigation are the"North Carolina Grammar and Composition Test for High Schools and Colleges" and the "Pressey (and others) Diagnostic Test in English Composition for Grades 7 to 12, Form 3." The North Carolina test deals with grammar and sentence structure as well as with punctuation, but only the latter will be discussed. The first of these tests was formulated after a study had been made of 1,500 themes submitted by representative North Carolina high school students ranging from the eighth through the eleventh grade. The punctuation used in the themes was carefully noted with a view to preparing a test on those marks which the papers showed high school students had been using and should have been using. It is the purpose of this test to locate the difficulties still present when students reach college. The test thus drawn up was given to all the students who entered the North Carolina College for Women in the fall of 1928. For this investigation two hundred papers were selected. Fifty of these represented the highest scores made; fifty, the lowest scores made; and one hundred, the scores made by students selected at random. A chart of the incorrect responses was made and studied. A copy of this test with the directions accompanying it follows.

# NORTH CAROLINA GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION TEST FOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

## Part I. Test for PUNCTUATION and CAPITALIZATION

-1. At Westfell lived Babette's godmother the noble English lady with her two daughters.

-2 I will not see him nor will I permit you to do so.

-3 As we staggered on up the dusty highway, the sun was intensely hot and the sand burned through the shoes of the soldiers.

-4 She asked where he lived.

-5 During his four years in college he found his most interesting subjects to be English, History, and Spanish.

-6 He cried out querulously "Why can't I?"

-7 Down into the basement all through the hall up into the attic and out of the window poured the smoke.

-8 The curve was seen too late all that could be done was to shut down on the throttle and take a chance.

-9 The meeting was attended by ex-president Adams.

-10 This boat, said he, is not seaworthy; it will be dangerous to board her.

-11 Didn't you say, "I will never answer that"?

-12 He entered the High School ub September of the year following his severe illness.

-13 I don't call that unpleasant in fact, I think it is charming.

-14 Charles who was absent the day before had not heard the instructions given by the teacher.

-15. These Druids mysterious Celtic priests designed Stonehenge.

-16. I admire a person who has good habits which he has cultivated himself.

-17. Nearly every boy has the desire to see the west.

-18. The ladies hats were blown quite away when the big propellers began to whirl.

-19. Accordingly, the world became divided between the two classes, the sages, the scattered few, and the vast multitude of men, mostlyfools.

-20. Here the iron lamp commenced swinging with redoubled violence and the frightened half child started from his seat.

-21. The state of ohio has given to our government many progressive presidents.

-22. These my friend are my reasons for supporting the measure you oppose.

-23. Although this does not seem possible where they have snow eight months in the year yet these fruits really grow as I have described them to you.

-24. You must remember everything you are told about this otherwise you will be considered ignorant.

-25. The title of this theme was "What I have gained from This Course".

-26. Dear Sir Inclosed please find a check for $2.00.

-27. Strange to say, the three greatest periods in English literature coincide with the reigns of three queens namely, Elizabeth, Anne , and Victoria.

-28. On June 7 1889 he started overland.

-29. When John saw the error in the game he cried out, "Why did you do that?"

-30. He expressed the wish that the whole race might be purified by fire and fagot.

-31. Its only fourteen miles to Kearney, there we can stock up.

-32. Because he had remained a poor man during his many terms he was considered an honest judge.

-33. He said that his work was so heavy he would not be able to attend the exercises.

-34. It fostered ideals which proved a saving leaven in corruption of social life but it was too cold, intellectual, and self-centered to regenerate society.

-35. Our time being short we did not visit the museum.

-36. In the rear of the house, where an old shed had stood, was a flower garden.

-37. He read from the one hundred and twenty first chapter.

-38. Young Jerry who had only made a feign of undressing when he went to bed was not long after his father.

-39. He called together the most faithful of his counselors and asked their advice.

-40. Most people prefer the spring of the year to any other season.

-41. The water which was beautiful and sparkling lapped the sides of the boat.

-42. James refused because he knew what the next step would be.

-43. He had an extremely bad habit: he never crosses his "t s".

-44. Dr Johnson, a highly educated man, teaches the class.

-45. The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.

-46. Dickens wrote A Tale of Two Cities.

-47. Since it was already getting very late we did not stop.

-48. To err is human to forgive divine.

-49. It was a dark cold gray cheerless afternoon.

-50. He may not know it, but the boys know that he is planning to surprise them.

PART I Directions for PUNCTUATION and CAPITALIZATION

Some of the following sentences lack marks of punctuation. Some contain errors in capitalization; in some cases a capital is incorrectly used, and in others a capital is needed. Each sentence should be regarded as one sentence. Examine the list at the right; then read each sentence on the test sheet and place at its left the number indicating what it needs to make the sentence correct. If it is correct as it stands, place by it the number indicating a correct sentence.

EXAMPLES: 2. He not only wished to go but he went.
Truth enobles a man learning adorns him13.

Punctuation and Capitalization.

1. Correct sentence.
2. One comma.
3. Two commas.
4. More than two commas.
5. A semicolon.
6. Colon.
7. Period.
8. A hyphen.
9. Quotation marks.
11. Capital.
12. Small letter.
13. Apotrophe.

Pressey (and others) Diagnostic Tests in English Composition for Grades 7 to 12, Form 3.

"The Pressey (and others) Diagnostic Tests in English Composition for Grades 7 to 12, Form 3" is based on a careful analytical study

of the best usage in current magazines, newspapers, and social letters. It is the purpose of this test to show the frequency of tendencies to error. In the division dealing with punctuation there are thirty sentences which lack marks except the period at the end of the sentence. The pupils were asked to supply the punctuation. In the division dealing with capitalization twenty-eight sentences which lacked only punctuation were used. The pupils taking the test were asked to draw a line under each letter that should be capitalized. The test was administered as part of the Fourth Nation-wide Survey to students in grades seven to eleven in every state in the Union except Nevada. Tables representing results were published. These tables were used in connection with the results from the"North Carolina Grammar and Composition Test" in order that conclusions for this investigation might be drawn. The specific incorrect responses were examined in the "North Carolina Grammar and Composition Test", and the general tendency to error was checked by a comparison with parallel cases in the other test.

## Texts and Manuals

The texts used are: "Theme-Building" by Ward, 1924 edition; "New Practical English for High Schools, Second Course" by Lewis and Hosic, 1927 edition; and "Self-Aids" by O'Rourke, 1927 edition. The manuals are: "Constructive English" by Ball, 1923 edition; "College Handbook of Composition" by Wooley and Scott, 1928 edition; and"Modern Punctuation" by Summey, 1919 edition. For the discussion of the present

conditions Ward's "What Is English?"[1] was examined. For the discussion of standards Barrett Wendell's "English Composition"[2] was consulted. Pressey's[3] experiments were used in connection with the texts mentioned before to establish what marks are used and how they are used.

1. Ward, C.H. "What Is English?", pp211-226

2. Wendell, Barrett "English Composition", pp. 20-28

3. Pressey Reports in the English Journal, May 1924 pp3

# CHAPTER I

## Standards

### The Need For Standards

No aspect of the field of composition presents as much confusion as does the matter of punctuation. Many intellectual people glory in the supposed fact that they are not hampered by a standardized set of rules and claim that their only guide in pointing is their feeling. If this practice of allowing the emotion to dictate pointing could be safely followed, the problem would be solved in so far as the mature writer is concerned. This practice, however, cannot be relied upon. The reader will not have in mind the code used by the author he is reading; consequently he will lose the fine distinction made by the writer. He will not comprehend the meaning; for, as Ward says, "No mark can have any meaning in any one person's mind, because meaning always involves an arguement between at least two people".[1]

And even if the educated writers could dispense with rules, what of the student who is learning to write? How shall we make him have the feeling for punctuation that the accomplished writer has? Such a task would be impossible without a system. The high school child wants a definite guide; he can follow no other. It is only by consistently following a

1. Ward, C.H. "What Is English?", pp. 217 and 211-226

sufficiently rigid standard that he can develop the ability to punctuate correctly. He has not been given a sufficiently definite standard; consequently college teachers who would like to devote their time to inspiration and appreciation must deaden themselves, their subject, and their students by a constant drill to eradicate some out-of-date principles which have been learned, to inculcate others which should have been learned, and to clear up confusions resulting from the teaching of various systems. It is absolutely necessary that some standard form of punctuation should be adopted.

## Our Standards And How They May Be Obtained.

But where are we to get out standards? People can rightfully claim that many different principles are employed and that the followers of each system consider themselves right. They can truthfully state that the whole system is extremely confusing, but they cannot prove that we have no standards.

It is true that we, unlike the French, have no academy whose duty it is to lay down rules we shall follow; but a present day writer, Barrett Wendell,[1] has set up for us a means for securing standards. According to Wendell good usage should be our standard. "Good usage", says Wendell,"must be reputable, national, and present". By reputable he means anything that is used by many eminent writers. The fact that one good writer uses a certain style does not make that style reputable, but concurrence in a certain usage by many established authors does

1. Wendell, Barrett, "English Composition", pp 20-28

constitute a reputable practice. By national Wendell explains that he means such practices as are employed, not by Americans alone, but by the whole English speaking race. In discusing present usage he recognizes that practices change and urges the acceptance of Pope's advice:

"Be not the first by whom the new are tried
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."[1.]

In determining what is reputable, national, and present we may again refer to Barrett Wendell and to C.H.Ward. Ward says that the best usage can be determined by an examination of the best handbooks and texts. He adds that periodicals furnish a good means of checking modern usage. He contends that these show, not what should be used, but what is actually employed today. A checking of the usage in the periodicals against that in the manuals and texts affords, according to Ward, an excellent idea of what is reputable, national, and present practice.[2.]

1. Wendell Barrett, "English Composition", pp20-28

2. Ward, C.H. "What Is English?", pp224-226

# CHAPTER II

## PRESENT USAGE

### Marks Employed

Before this study can be pursued, it will be necessary to discover what marks of punctuation are used today. S.H. Pressey and Helen Ruhlen, in an article in the "English Journal", May 1924, relate an experiment used in order to determine the marks most frequently employed by skillful writers of today. They examined one hundred business letters and fifty professional letters received by one of the writers. The various punctuation marks used, except in the heading and complimentary close, were carefully noted and systematically tabulated. Then one issue each of "World's Work", "Scribner's", the "Atalantic Monthly", and the "New Republic" was considered. The tenth page of each magazine was used. The newspapers furnished the next information. One copy each of the "Ohio State Journal", the "Columbus Dispatch", the "Cicinnati Enquirer", and the "New York Times" was considered. Only the first page was used. Again the results were tabulated. Usage was classified according to the most generally accepted handbooks, and the results for each group were expressed in terms of the number of cases of that usage per ten thousand.

The following table thus worked out by Pressey and Miss Ruhlen will show the marks most frequently used.[1.]

1. Pressey, S.H. and Ruhlen, Helen. In the English Journal, May 1924 pp325-331

TABLE I

Frequency of Use of Various Marks

| | Magazines | Papers | Letters | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full Stops: | | | | |
| Periods | 398 | 539 | 666 | 535 |
| Question Marks | 18 | 10 | 15 | 14 |
| Exclamation Points | 8 | 2 | — | 3 |
| Total End Stops | 424 | 551 | 681 | 552 |
| Stops Within the Sentence: | | | | |
| Commas | 607 | 624 | 438 | 556 |
| Semicolons | 46 | 13 | 7 | 22 |
| Colon | 17 | 6 | 9 | 11 |
| Dashes | 38 | 10 | 16 | 21 |
| Parenthesis | 6 | 1 | 13 | 7 |
| Total Internal Stops | 714 | 654 | 483 | 617 |
| S pecial Marks: | | | | |
| Quotations Marks | 59 | 58 | 16 | 44 |
| Apostrophe | 42 | 57 | 22 | 40 |
| Total Special Marks | 101 | 115 | 38 | 84 |

## Functions of the Marks

The experiment just discussed shows clearly the marks of punctuation that are most frequently used today. A study of the texts and manuals mentioned in the introduction and an examination of Pressey's conclusions will give the most reputable usage assigned each mark. The following compilation is the result of such a study.

1. Period

   Use a period:

   a. At the end of every declarative and imperative sentence.

   b. After abbreviations.

   c. After initials.

2. Exclamation Point

   Use an exclamation point:

   a. After an exclamatory sentence.

   bb After an exclamatory element in a sentence.

3. Question Mark

   Use a question mark after every interrogative sentence.

4. Comma

   Use a comma:

   a. To set off:

      (1) Words in direct address

      (2) Items in dates and addresses

      (3) Nonrestrictive clauses and phrases

      (4) Parenthetical expressions

   b. Before a short informal quotation.

   c. To separate:

(1) Words in a series.

(2) A series of adjectives preceding a noun.

(3) The members of a compound sentence when a simple conjuction is expressed.

d. To follow:

(1) An introductory clause or phrase.

(2) The salutation of a friendly letter.

(3) The complimentary close of any letter.

5. Semicolon

Use of the semicolon:

a. Between clauses of a compound sentence not joined by a conjunction.

b. Between the members of a compound sentence not joined by a simple conjunction.

c. Between the elements of a compound sentence joined by a simple conjunction when either element contains a comma.

6. Colon

Use a colon:

a. Before:

(1) A list of items or examples

(2) A long formal quotation

b. After the salutation of a business letter

c. Between figures denoting the time of day.

7. Apostrophe

Use the apostrophe

a. To show possession.

b. To indicate the omission of letters.

c. To form the plural of letters, symbols, and numbers.

8. Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks:

a. To inclose a direct quotation.

b. To indicate the quoted titles of themes, a short story, a magazine, a poem, a play, or a piece of literature.

c. To call attention to technical, foreign, and slang expressions.

9. Hyphen

Use a hyphen:

a. Between the elements of a compound word.

b. Between the syllables of a word broken at the end of the line.

10. Dash

Use the dash:

a. To indicate a break in thought.

b. To set off highly parenthetical expressions.

c. Before an after thought.

d. Before a summarizing statement. [1]

1. Ward Theme Building, 1924 edition, pp.508-527
O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition, pp.166-172
Lewis and Hosic New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition pp. 519-530
Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, pp. 313-338
Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, pp. 184
Summey Modern Punctuation, 1919edition, entire book.
Pressey and Ruhlen English Journal, May 1924, pp. 325-331

## Present Practices in ~~Punctuation~~ Capitalization

Pressey has made an additional study to determine present usage in capitalization. He used one issue each of the following: "World's Work", "Saturday Evening Post", the "North American Review", and "Scribners". He also examined one issue each of the following newspapers: the "Ohio State Journal", "Columbus Dispatch", and "Cincinnati Enquirer". Again letters were used. This time information was secured from one hundred and twenty business letters and fifty professional letters. Only the tenth page of every magazine was used, and only the front page of every newspaper. Headings and complimentary closes were omitted from the survey. The usage indicated in the table worked out by Pressey is based upon frequency per 1.000 words.[1.]

1. Pressey, S.H. English Journal, December 1924, pp. 727-732

TABLE II

Frequency of Use of Capitals

| | Magazines | Newspapers | Letters | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beginning of sentence | 400 | 345 | 358 | 368 |
| Beginning of quotation | 42 | 10 | 5 | 19 |
| Name of person | 118 | 134 | 42 | 98 |
| Initials | 3 | 16 | 3 6 | 18 |
| Title with name | 48 | 118 | 35 | 67 |
| Title as proper name | 11 | 3 | 7 | 7 |
| Name of place | 107 | 215 | 47 | 123 |
| Nationality, race, language | 41 | 55 | — | 3 2 |
| Name of organization | 46 | 56 | 81 | 61 |
| Title of book, heading | 33 | 6 | 7 | 15 |
| Commercial trade name | 1 | 5 | 121 | 42 |
| Date | 17 | 41 | 61 | 40 |
| Reference to duty, Government | 36 | 37 | 2 | 25 |
| I | 65 | 2 | 65 | 44 |
| Miscellaneous | 14 | 7 | 34 | 18 |
| Total | 982 | 1050 | 901 | 977 |

A study of the table will give a clear idea as to which uses of the capitals are of most importance, Other uses which did not occur in the table except in the miscellaneous group are: capitals for nouns denoting sections of the country instead of direct, capital for the first word in every line poetry, and a capital for the "O".

# CHAPTER III

## Similarity in Results of the Two Texts

An investigation of the two texts, "The North Carolina Grammar and Cpmposition Test for High Schools and Colleges" and the "Pressey (and others) Diagnostic Test in English Composition for Grades 7 to 12, Form 3", will show a strikingly parallel situation. The results of the first test indicate the tendencies present in the student just entering college, for few North Carolina schools have twelve grades. The results of the Pressey Test were based on the tendencies of the twelfth grade student. The similarity of the results will establish the belief that tendencies revealed by the North Carolina test are prevalent over the nation, for the results of Pressey's work represent the responses of the students throughout the United States. This conclusion will justify the study of the errors in the North Carolina test as representative of general conditions and will uphold the reliability of the results.

TABLE III

Per Cent of Errors in

North Carolina Grammar and Composition Test for High Schools and Colleges

| | Comma | Semicolon | Colon | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital | Small Letters | Apostrophe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Sentences Needing Marks | 20 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| No. Errors | 999 | 365 | 344 | 138 | 34 | 416 | 120 | 263 |
| Per cent of Errors | 25 | 55 | 51 | 69 | 8 | 52 | 9 | 40.5 |

TABLE IV

Per Cent of Errors in

Pressey (and others) Diagnostic Test in English Composition for Grades 7-12 Form 3

| | Comma | Semicolon | Colon | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital | Small letter | Apostrophe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Sentences Needing Mark | 12 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 23 | 0 | 4 |
| Per Cent of Errors | 34 | 46 | 41 | 0 | 44 | 24 | 0 | 45 |

Although a study of the two tables reveals a close similarity in most cases, there are some divergences. These may be explained. For instance, take the case of the quotation mark. The test by Pressey contains a sentence in which punctuation is required for a technical word. This sentence was missed by seventy-four per cent of the twelfth grade students. This large per cent necessarily raised the general one and placed emphasis on the need for study in regard to quotation marks. The North Carolina test does not contain such a sentence; consequently a direct comparison is lacking.

There is a wide divergence in the case of capitalization. This, too, may be accounted for. The North Carolina test used two methods of ascertaining the difficulty in the use of capital letters. Some sentences need capitalization; others have it and should not. The responses to the first type show that fifty-two per cent had difficulty. The second type, however, shows only a nine per cent error. An average of the responses to the two types will make the fault a 30.5 per cent one. This will correspond more nearly with the 24 per cent error in the Pressey test.

# CHAPTER IV

## Incorrect Responses and Their Causes

It is not enough, however, to know what marks occasion most difficulty and to make up our mind to teach more effectively the rules governing these marks. It is necessary to determine what caused these incorrect responses. Often the confusion of one rule with another causes the wrong reaction. We should know, then, what principles are confused and seek to remedy the trouble. Often the difficulty is in the statement of the rule. Sometimes it is due to a disagreement among authorities as to what is the proper usage. Whatever the causes of the difficulties are they should be eliminated.

The tables used in this chapter seek to show the source of confusion and to prove that the difficulty is widely prevalent. The information gathered from the North Carolina test shows what the wrong response was in each case and how often that response was made. An accumulation of incorrect responses under the head indicates confusion.. A comparison of this wrong response with the correct one will point the source of difficulty. The last two columns show the consistency of the appearance errors in each case. Often a parallel case could not be found in the Pressey test; in such cases the last column is blank. The figures given under the Pressey test column are averages; whereas those from the North Carolina test are results of specific cases.

OFFICIALLY NOTED p 23 missng

## The Period, the Exclamation Point, and the Question Mark

According to Pressey, the period diffuculties do not arise from a misunderstanding of the principle of punctuation but from a lack of sentecne sense; consequently they will not be discussed here. The question mark and exclamation point do not appear very often and are do restricted in use that there is little need for a discussion of these.

TABLE V THE COMMA

| Uses | No. of Sentences | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses: Correct | I Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semi-colon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Apostrophe | Total Per Cent of Errors in N.C. Test | Total Per Cent Errors in Pressey Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To set off: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (1) Appositives | 1 | | 20.5 | | 3.5 | 2.5 | .5 | | | | .5 | | | 27.0 | 22.0 |
| | 15 | 3.5 | 6.5 | | 7.5 | | | | | .5 | 4.0 | 6.0 | | 28.0 | |
| (2) Dates and Addresses | 28 | | 51.0 | | 2.0 | 1.0 | .5 | .5 | | | | | | 55.0 | 63.0 |
| (3) Words in Direct Address | 22 | 4.5 | 14.0 | | | .5 | .5 | | .5 | | 1.5 | | | 21.5 | |
| (4) Non-restrictive) Relative) Clauses) | 14 | 1.5 | 12.0 | | 1.0 | .5 | | | .5 | | | | | 15.5 | 32.0 |
| | 38 | | 12.0 | | 3.0 | 2.0 | .5 | | .5 | | | | | 18.0 | |
| | 41 | 8.0 | 17.5 | | 1.5 | .5 | | | | | | | | 27.5 | |
| To separate: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (1) Elements of a compound sentence with an expressed conjunction | 2 | | | | 1.0 | 16.0 | | | | | | | | 17.0 | 15.0 |
| | 20 | 12.0 | | 6.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 | .5 | 2.0 | | 1.0 | | | | 30.0 | |
| | 42 | 8.0 | | 1.0 | | 10.5 | 1.5 | | | | | | | 21.0 | |
| (2) Words in a series | 7 | .5 | | 8.5 | | .5 | | | | | | | | 9.5 | 18.0 |
| (3) Series of adjectives preceding a noun | 49 | | .5 | 4.5 | | .5 | | | | | | | | 5.5 | |

(Continued)

TABLE V THE COMMA (Continued)

| Uses | No. of Sentences | Correct | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses | | | | | | | | | | Total per cent Errors in N. C. Test | Total per Cent Errors Pressey Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | I Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semi-colon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Apostrophe | | |
| To follow: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (1) Introductory | 23 | | | 24.0 | 6.5 | 16.0 | 2.0 | .5 | 1.5 | | | | | 5 | 3.5 |
| Adverb Clauses | 29 | 50.0 | | .5 | .5 | | .5 | | | | | .5 | | 52.0 | |
| | 32 | 3.5 | | 6.5 | 3.0 | 3.0 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 47 | 5.5 | | 1.0 | 4.5 | | | | | | | | .5 | 11.5 | |
| (2) Introductory Phrase | 35 | 6.0 | | 2.5 | | 10.5 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 21.5 | |
| To precede: A short direct quotation | 6 | 2.5 | | 3.5 | | 1.0 | .5 | .5 | | | 1.5 | | | 9.5 | 29.5 |

Appositives--- In the table the use of the comma with the appositive comes first. An examination of the two sentences in which the appositive occurs reveals the fact that there is a strong tendency on the part of the students to use one comma instead of two. In the first sentence 20.5 percent of the 200 students wished to use only one comma. In the fifteenth sentence 6.5 percent preferred this usage. In the first sentence 3.5 percent preferred more than two commas. In the other case 7.5 percent added a superfluous comma. In the last sentences there was an indication to mark the usage correct. Other responses were not frequent enough to justify treatment.

The preference for one comma is probably due to the statement of the rule for appositives. Most of the texts and manuals[1] use the term "set off", but two[2] do not. Some of those using the term do not emphasize the fact that the term means to use a comma on both sides. A restating of the rule with the use of the term "set off" and an explanation of thesame would help clear away the difficulty. The tendency to use more than two commas may be attributed in the first case to the use of a prepositional phrase at the beginning and in the second case to the fact that two adjectives preceded the same noun. (See test)

1. Ward--Theme Building, 1924 edition, p. 515
   O'Rourke--Self-Aids, 1927 edition, p. 169
   Ball-- Constructive English, 1923 edition. p. 320
   Woolley and Scott--College Handbook of Compostion, 1928 edition p. 188
2. Lewis and Hoser-- New Practical English for High School, 1927 edition p. 522
   Summey-- Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 86

Dates and Addresses-- An examination of the table with reference to the use of commas with items in dates and addresses reveals practically the same situation. There is only one sentence needing punctuation of this kind. Of the 55 percent who missed the sentence 51 percent stated that one comma was necessary. Again the rules may be at fault. Two[1] of the texts use the term "set off", but one[2] does not emphasize the meaning of the term. O'Rourke[3] makes his rule very definite. The manuals[4] were not so clear on the subject. They use the terms "separate" and "between". It seems that a restating of the rule might remove the difficulties.

Words in Direct Address— In the case of vocatives the same difficulty presents itself. Of the 21.5 percent who missed the 22 sentence 14 percent mused one comma. Again the difficulty may be charged to the statement of the rule. Five[5] of the authorities examined use the term "set off". The sixth[6] does not make this point clear. Since the term used is fairly consistent, the difficulty with the vocative must be in an inadequate understanding of the term "set off". The fact that it means the use of two commas should be stressed.

1. Ward— Theme Building, 1924 editon, p. 515 and 516
   Lewis and Hosic— New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p. 523
2. Lewis and Hosic— New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p. 575
3. O'Rourke— Self Aids, 1927 edition, p. 169
4. Wooley and Scott— College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 190
5. Ward— Theme Building, 1924 edition, p515
   Lewis and Hosic— New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p522
   O'Rourke— Self Aidss, 1927 edition, p. 170
   Ball— Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 320
   Woolley and Scott— College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 188
6. Summey— Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 195

Non-restrictive Clauses. This feature of punctuation has always given difficulty. The first sentence in this case, however, was missed by only 15 per cent of the students. This is probably due to the fact that a proper name preceded the relative clause, and students in most cases have been given definite instructions as to the practice to be employed in this ~~is the~~ situation. The same is true of sentence 38. This sentence was missed by only 18 per cent of the students. Sentence 4, however, which contained no proper noun, was missed by 27.5 per cent of those taking the test.

In sentence 14, the largest per cent of errors indicates that the students wished to use one comma. This response was made by 12 per cent of those reacting incorrectly. The greatest number of incorrect responses to sentence 38, 12 per cent, represented the same choice. The same situation is found in sentence 41. Here 17.5 chose the one comma response. Of the remaining group 8 per cent considered the sentence correct. The e facts would indicate that the matter of "setting off material" is not clearly understood, for five[1.] of the authorities use this term in stating their rule. The other[2.] speaks of punctuation "in pairs". The fact that 8 per cent thought sentence 4 correct may mean that there is difficulty in distinguishing[3.] between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses. Two of the authorities consulted gave very definite ideas as to what each is.

1. Ward Theme Building, 1924 edition, pp.521-522
   Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition p. 320
   Lewis and Hosic New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition p.522
   Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p.193
   O'Rourke Self Aids 1927 edition pp.170-171
2. Summey Modern Punctuation pp.85,86, and 218
3. O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition, pp.170-171
   Summey Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition p. 218

Non-restrictive Phrases- Neither of the tests contains a non-restrictive phrase within the sentence; but it is highly probable that such phrases would cause the same difficulty as did the clauses, for four[1] of the authorities studied use the same terms as were used in regard to other cases needing two commas. Again the meaning of "set off" needs emphasis. As for the meaning of the term "non-restrictive", O'Rourke[2] and Summey[3] state very definitely what the term means. Such a statement by all authorities would help to remedy the situation.

Parenthetical Expressions- Again the North Carolina test does not provide a typical sentence for analysis. The Pressey test, however, does. The results show that 44 per cent of the twelfth grade students missed a sentence containing a very obvious parenthetical element. Since in the other sentences there was a very general misunderstanding of the fact that two commas are necessary "to set off" material, it is highly probable that the same is the case with the Pressey sentence containing this particular feature.[4] Four authorities use the term "set off".[5] The sixth does not use the term and does not lay down an absolute principle.

Then there may have been a misunderstanding as to what is meant by "parenthetical".[6] One text used the word "non-essential".

1. Ward Theme Building, 1924 edition, pp.518,514,520
   Lewis and Hosic New Practical English, 1927 edition, p522
   Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition,p320
   Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, p144
2. O'Rourke Self Aids, 1922 edition, p170
3. Summey Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, pp86,89
4. Lewis and Hosic New Practical English, 1927 edition, p522
   O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition, p170
   Ball Constructive English, 1927 edition , p.320
   Wooley and Scott College and Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition pp188-
5. Summey Modern Punctuation , 1919 edition p.86
6. O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition p.330

This might have more meaning for the student. Two authorities[1] make themselves very clear as to the meaning of the term. Clearness and complete understanding of the term are necessary.

Compound Sentences Joined by a Simple Conjunction. The table indicates that the chief tendencies of the wrong responses were to use a semicolon or to mark the sentence correct as it stands. In sentence 2 the tendency was to use a semicolon. In this case the conjunction "nor" is used. The results would indicate that students did not classify "nor" as a simple conjunction. It is quite easy to see why this error should occur, for authorities do not agree among themselves as to the particular words that may be termed "simple conjunctions ". One authority[2] names three: "and","or",and "nor". Later, however, he included others under another head termed "conjuctions meaning "but". This double classification is misleading to the student. Another author[3] gives four conjunctions: "or","nor","for", and "but". O'Rourke[4] does not specify the type of conjunction requiring a comma. Ball's[5] rule is more vague than O'Rourke's. He mentions only two conjunctions, "but" and "for". He says these may be preceded by a comma, a semicolon, or a period. Sometimes a colon is correct. "The College Handbook"[6] names six conjunctions: "and","but","for","or", "neither", and"nor". These are called "pure conjunctions." The term "grammatical" corresponds to the term "simple". He recommends the use of the comma with "grammatical conjunctions." According to him these are "and","but","or","for", and "nor". Sentence 42 presents the same difficulty. Sentence 20 shows 6.5 per cent of the students were inclined to the semicolon.

1. Summey Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p.86
2. Ward Theme Building, 1924 edition, p.512
   Lewis and Hosic New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition,p.512
3. O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition, p.169
4. Ball Constructive English 1923 edition, p.322
5. Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition p. 190
6. Summey Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition p.72

Introductory Adverb Clauses. There are four sentences showing difficulty with punctuating of an introductory adverb clause. In sentences 23, 32, and 47, the tendency was to use two commas instead of one. In the first of these sentences 24 per cent of the students stated that two commas were needed. In the second sentence 72, 6.5 per cent indicate this usage. An examination of sentence 23 reveals the presence of two dependent clauses. One of these, however, restricts a word in the other and should not have been set off. Sentence 72 contains a restrictive phrase. Only 4.5 per cent made the error in sentence 47. There is apparently no reason for it here. Students evidently consider these elements in 23 and 32 non-restrictive. The problem here is one of teaching pupils to distinguish between restrictive and non-restrictive elements.

In sentences 29 and 47, however, the tendency was to mark the sentence correct. This error was made by 50 per cent in the first case and by 5.5.in the second. The error here may have been due to the fact that the student was not able to recognize an adverbial clause, or she may not have been taught to use a comma here. Three[1.] of the authorities consulted hint at the fact that this usage is going out of date or that its use was not absolutely required, but all[2.] of them advocate its practice at present.

Introductory Phrase- In the North Carolina test there was only one sentence containing an introductory phrase. This phrase is a nominative absolute; consequently it is difficult to establish from it anything

1. Ward ThemeBuilding , 1924 edition, p. 523
   Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition,p. 191
   Summey Modern Punctuation, 1929 edition, p. 218
2. Lewis and Hosic New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition,p.522
   Ball Constructive English , 1923 edition, p. 321
   O'Rourke Self Aids, 1927 edition, p. 169

concerning introductory phrases in general. The tendency in sentence 35 was to use a semicolon. This practice was suggested by 10.5 per cent of the students making an error in this case. It was probably due to the fact that the presence of a noun with a verb form gave the impression of an independent clause. This, however, is a matter for grammar and not for punctuation. As for the accepted punctuation of all introductory phrases, three texts[1.] agree. Most introductory phrases containing a verb form are set off. One[2.] text gives a very definite statement concerning prepositional phrases. The advice is not to punctuate them unless failure to do so would cause misreading.

Quotations. The use of a comma before a short direct quotation caused little difficulty. Sentence 6 is the only one of this kind in the test. Only 9 per cent missed it. Of these 3.5 per cent wished to use two commas. This is probably due to the fact that they thought "querulously" should be set off to prevent misreading. There seems to have been no real confusion with another rule.

1. Lewis and Hosic New and Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p.5
   Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 321
   Wooley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 191
2. Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 321

# CHAPTER V

## Incorrect Responses and Their Causes (Cont'd)

### Importance of the Semicolon and Colon

The semicolon and colon are not used so frequently as the period and the comma, but they do appear more often than many of the marks. They have certain peculiar uses ascribed to them, and these uses are of sufficient importance to warrant an investigation of the difficulties and confusions found in connection with their use.

### The Semicolon

A study of the table given will show the confusions arising in attempts to use the semicolon.

TABLE VI. THE SEMICOLON

| | No. of Sentences | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses: Correct | 1 Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semicolon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Apostrophe | Total per cent Errors in N. C. Test | Total per cent Errors Pressey Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between the elements of a compound sentence when no conjunction is expressed | 8 | 2.0 | 14.5 | 4.5 | | 3.5 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 26.5 | |
| | 13 | 7.0 | 50.5 | 2.0 | | | | 2.5 | | 1.0 | | | .5 | 63 .5 | |
| | 24 | 4.5 | 40.0 | 9.5 | 1.0 | .5 | | .5 | | | | | | 5 6.0 | |
| | 48 | 1.0 | 8.0 | .5 | | 2.5 | | 1.0 | | 3.0 | .5 | | | 16.5 | |
| Between the elements of a compound sentence when the conjunction is expressed but there is internal punctuation | 3 | 37.0 | | 1.0 | .5 | | 1.0 | .5 | | | 1.0 | | | 41.0 | |
| | 34 | 6.5 | | 13.5 | 1.5 | .5 | | .5 | | | .5 | | .5 | 23.5 | |
| Before "namely," "viz.," "i.e.," "e.g.," and "for instance" | 27 | 23.0 | 38.5 | | | 1.5 | .5 | 4.5 | | .5 | 3 .0 | .5 | | 80.0 | |

Compound Sentences without a Conjunction— A correct understanding of the use of a semicolon between the members of a compound sentence that has no conjunction expressed is of utmost importance. It will prevent that most unpardonable of mistakes, the comma blunder. A study of the table will show how few students understand this principle. The majority of errors are made in all of the four sentences showed that the pupils were inclined to use a comma to separate the independent elements. In sentences 8 and 48 the tendency is not very strong. Only 14.5 per cent indicated this usage in these sentences. The per cent was lower for sentence 48. In the other two sentences, however, there was an overwhelming tendency toward this response. Over half, or 50.5 per cent, of the students thought a comma sufficient for sentence 24. Likewise 40.0 percent thought a comma a strong enough point for sentence 48. Pressey's test also showed a great tendency to errors. His results showed that 63 per cent of the pupils tested had reacted incorrectly.

The difficulty in this case is not with the rules. There is almost perfect agreement in these. Five[1] of the authorities consulted state emphatically that a mark stronger than a comma is necessary. In fact the only substitute mentioned by the five is the period. The sixth[2]

1. Ward— Theme Building, 1924 edition, p. 509
   Lewis and Hosic— New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p. 520
   O'Rourke— Self Aids, 1927 editon, p. 171
   Ball— Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 319
   Woolley and Scott— College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 199

2. Summey— Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 201

agrees with the others but mentions some rare cases where the comma may be acceptable. Even in these cases, however, it is dangerous to use this mark. It is better not to vary at all where there is already a great tendency to error.

Compound Sentences Joined by a Simple Conjunction but Containing Internal Punctuation-- The North Carolina test contains two sentences of this type. There was a tendency to mark number three correct as it stood. This response was made by 37 per cent of those tested. This sentence contains the conjunction "and". The first independent clause is very short. These students may have had in mind the rule concerning the length of the clauses and the influence of that length upon compound sentences in which the conjunction "and" appears. Number 34 contains the conjunction "but". Only 6.5 per cent wished to mark this sentence correct, and they may have been influenced by the same rule. Here, however, the clauses are longer.

The statement of the rules may have something to do with the misunderstanding of this principle. O'Rourke and Ball do not discuss this practice. The other authorities[1] recommend the usefulness of the semicolon in this case, but they do not say emphatically that it should be used. The rules should be phrased positively wherever possible.

1. Ward-- Theme Building, 1924 edition, p.525
   Lewis and Hosic-- New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edittion, p. 520
   Woolley and Scott-- College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p200

Sentence 34 reveals another tendency which is more prominent than the one just discussed. Here 13.5 per cent of the students wished to use two commas. The presence of a relative clause probably caused this difficulty. This clause, however, is restrictive. The trouble here is with the inability to distinquish between non-restrictive and restrictive elements.

Namely-- The sentence missed by the greatest per cent of students is number 27. This sentence was punctuated incorrectly by 80 per cent of those tested. It contains the expression "namely". It is a sentence taken from Tanners' "Composition and Rhetoric", and Tanner uses a semicolon. An examination of the rules given for the use of such expressions will show why a great number missed the sentence. The best authorities are not at all agreed among themselves. Ward[1] says, "Use a dash before and a comma (or a colon) after such introducing words as 'namely' and 'that is'". Lewis and Hosic[2] say nothing of the matter in their new book. O'Rourke also omits a discussion. Ball[2] says "Put a comma (not a colon or dash) before and after "Namely" and "that is" (unless "that is" is followed by a principal clause when it is usually preceded by a semicolon." Woolley and Scott[3] say "In introducing an example or an explanation with one of the expressions"namely", 'viz', 'e.g', 'that is', and 'ie', apply the following rules:

1. Ward-- Theme Building, 1924 edition, p. 527
2. Ball-- Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 323
3. Woolley and Scott-- College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 220

(a) The expression should be followed by a comma.
(b) When the expression introduce a sentence or a principal clause, the expression should be preceded by a period or a semicolon.
(c) When the expression introduces a merely appositive member, or several such, the expression should be preceded by a semicolon, by a dash, or by a colon."

Summey[1] says that the most logical way to punctuate such a sentence is to place a comma before the term and no mark after it. He says the weight of text book authority comes from the use of a comma or dash before and after. He says the semicolon is going out of use. It is no wonder, then, that students find difficulty in punctuating sentences containing these terms. If the authorities are so wide apart in their conception of correct usage, what standard can an inexperienced writer have?

## The Colon

The colon has few uses, but these are important. Although they are highly restricted, these uses cause great difficulty. This statement is supported by the fact that 51 per cent of those taking the North Carolina test found trouble in using this mark. In the Pressey test 41 per cent failed to respond correctly.

The following table will show the wrong responses given to sentences containing colons.

1. Summey--Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, pp. 98 and 99

TABLE VII THE COLON

| Uses | No. of Sentences | Correct | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses: 1 Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semicolon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Samll Letters | Apostrophe | Total Per Cent of Errors in N.C. Test | Total Per Cent Errors in Press Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before an Enumeration or Summary Explanation | 19 | 39.0 | .5 | .5 | | | 18.5 | .5 | 4.0 | | 5.0 | .5 | | 68.0 | 52.0 |
| After the Salutation of a Business Letter | 26 | 4.0 | 15.0 | 3.0 | .5 | | 8.0 | | 1.0 | .5 | .5 | .5 | 2.0 | 35.0 | |

Before an Enumeration-- One sentence in the test needed a colon before an enumeration. This sentence was missed by 68 per cent of those tested. Of these, 39 per cent said the sentence was correct. This reaction was the result of the fact that a comma preceded the enumeration instead of a colon. The student may have had in mind some of the various rules concerning "namely" and supposed that this sentence was a parallel case.

The next greatest number of errors is represented by the 18 per cent who wished to use a semicolon. Again the state of confusion concerning "namely" and like words may have caused the rise of this misunderstanding.

The rules on this usage are not emphatically stated. Lewis and Hosic and O'Rourke have nothing to say on the subject. Ward[1] states his rule in the imperative. Ball[2] and Woolley and Scott[3] advocate the use of a colon in such situations. The latter is more definite than Ball. Summey[4] does not require the use of the colon every time, but he states very clearly what cases usually need such punctuation.

After the Salutation of a Business Letter-- The sentence needing a colon after the salutation of a business letter does not reveal any outstanding confusion. The incorrect responses are more less scattered.

1. Ward-- Theme Building, 1924 edition, p. 526
2. Ball-- Constructive English, 1923 edition, pp. 326 and 327
3. Woolley and Scott,- College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 201
4. Summey-- Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 193

There is an accumulation, however, under the one comma division. This would indicate that the student did not distinguish between the salutation of a business letter and a friendly letter. The next largest number of incorrect responses indicates that a semicolon should be used. No authority advocates this usage, and there is apparently no reason for this choice.

The rules in this case should not cause any confusion. Only one authority does not state that a colon should follow the salutation of a business letter. This one is Ball.[1] He advocates the use of a comma after all salutations, for he says they are all vocatives similar to many used at the beginning of sentences and should be punctuated as such.

1. Ball-- Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 347

# CHAPTER VI

## Incorrect Responses and Their Causes (Cont.)

### Quotation Marks

The treatment of quotation marks by the North Carolina test is very inadequate. There is only one sentence containing a direct quotation and only one containing a quoted title. No technical words appear. These two sentences can not be very suggestive of the general tendencies in the use of quotations marks. A table, however, has been made of these two sentences, and an explanation of what they indicate will be discussed.

TABLE IX QUOTATION MARKS

| Uses | No. of Sentences | Correct | 1 Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semi-colon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Per Cent of Errors in N.C. Test | Per Cent of Errors in Pressey Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Set off a Dirct Quotation | 10 | 7.0 | | | | | | 1.0 | | | | | 8.0 | 46.0 |
| To Set off Quoted Titles | 46 | .5 | 5.5 | .5 | | | 2.5 | | | | | | 9.0 | |

Quoted Titles-- The test contains only one sentence illustrating the setting off of quoted titles. Only one response appeared with enough frequency to indicate confusion. The 5.5 per cent who made an error indicated that they thought a comma should precede the title. The giving of this response indicated that the students were confusing the punctuation of a quoted title with the punctuation of a direct quotation. The quotation is preceded by a comma, but the title is not. The fact that so few students missed the sentence may again be attributed to the agreement of authorities[1] and the definite statement of the rule.

1. O'Rourke-- Self Aids, 1927 edition, p. 168
   Ball-- Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 331
   Woolley and Scott-- College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 267
   Summey-- Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 148

## The Apostrophe

The North Caroli a test contains examples of all three of the general uses of the apostrophe. The average tendency toward error in the use of this mark in this test is 44 per cent. The Pressey test reveals a 45 per cent error. The close agreement of these results indicates a high percentage of reliability in the results of the two tests. The scattering of the incorrect responses and the pronounced tendency to mark the sentences that the proper emphasis has not been placed upon the use of the apostrophe and not that the use of this mark causes any donfusion in the mind of students. This supposition is supported by the results from the Briggs Punctuation Test, given to all students in the Hugh Morson High School at Raleigh, N.C. The sentences needing apostrophes proved exceedingly difficult. In most cases the sentences were left just as they stood. The need for the apostrophe was entirely overlooked. An investigation of the situation revealed the fact that teachers had assumed that pupils had mastered the usage of this mark in the grades and had neglected it in order to place emphasis on others.

TABLE VIII THE APOSTROPHE

| Uses | No of Sentences | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses | | | | | | | | | | | | Total Per Cent of Errors in N.C. Test | Total Per Cent Errors in Pressey Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Correct | 1 Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semi-colon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Apostrophe | | |
| To Show Possession | 18 | 12.5 | 27.0 | .5 | | 4.0 | | | | | 1.0 | | | 45.0 | 54.0 |
| To Indicate Omission of Letters | 31 | 36.5 | 7.5 | | | 3.0 | .5 | 1.0 | .5 | 1.5 | | | | 53.0 | 36.5 |
| To Form Plural of Symbols etc. | 43 | 12.0 | 2.0 | | | | | 1.0 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 4.5 | .5 | | 23.5 | 31.0 |

Although an analysis of the table does not reveal any confusions concerning the use of apostrophe, it does reveal some other tendencies of importance. These may have appared in other discussions, but the conclusions concerning these sentence will be valuable in so far as they support those already made. Of the students tested 12.5 per cent declared sentence 18 correct. This number is exceeded by only the number indicating the use of one comma. This choice was indicated by 27.5 per cent. An examination of the sentence reveals an adverb clause. This clause, however, does not come at the beginning of the sentence and is not non- restrictive in meaning. The difficulties represented here are a tendency to overlook the apostrophe and an inability to recognize a restrictive element.

There was a decided tendency to mark sentence 31 correct. This usage was declared correct by 39.5 per cent of the 53 per cent who missed the sentence. Again some students wished to supply a comma. An examination of the sentence shows that the record independent clause is introduced by the word "there". These pupils probably considered this an introductory word and thought a comma should follow it.

The forty-third sentence was marked correct by 16 per cent of the students. The only other tendency of any importance is the one to supply a capital letter. Only 4.5 per cent showed this. It is difficult to determine the trouble here, for there is no good reason for capitalizing anything in that sentence. It may be that some students wished to begin a new sentence or that they wanted to capitalize the "t".

The rules for the use of the apostrophe are generally agreed upon

by all authorities[1] consulted. In practically every case the rule is very definitely expressed.

## The Hyphen

In the test there is only one sentence requiring a hyphen. Pressey's test does not deal with it at all. The tendency to disregard this mark seems general, for 54 per cent of the students examined on the one sentence in the North Carolina test marked it correct. The hyphen necessary is one between the members of a compound word. Since the tendency to disregard the mark is very noticeable, it seems that teachers should be careful to impress upon their pupils the necessity for its use in certain narrowly defined cases.

1. Ward-- Theme Building, 1924 edition, pp.405 and 481
   Lewis and Hosic-- New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, pp.528 and 529
   O'Rourke-- Self Aids, 1927 edition, pp.132 and 133
   Ball-- Constructive English-- 1927 edition, pp.337 and 407
   Woolley and Scott-- College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, pp.216 and 217
   Summey-- Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, pp.30, 170 and 171

# CHAPTER VII

## Incorrect Responses and Their Causes (Cont.)

### Capitalization

The matter of capitalization is not handled as exhaustively by the North Carolina test as it is by the Pressey one. The Pressey test has on this subject a whole division containing twenty-eight sentences; whereas the North Carolina test has only six sentences of this type. In the North Carolina test the subject is approached from two angles. Some sentences contain small letters which should be capitals; others contain capital letters which should be small letters. This situation may be more clearly understood by an analysis of the table after the sentences in the test have been reviewed.

TABLE X CAPITAL LETTERS

| Capitals | | Per Cent of Incorrect Responses | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uses | No. of Sentences | Correct | 1 Comma | 2 Commas | More than 2 Commas | Semi-colon | Colon | Period | Hyphen | Quotation Marks | Capital Letters | Small Letters | Per Cent of Errors in N.C. Test | Per Cent of Errors in Pressey Test |
| Titles with Proper Names | 9 | 62.0 | 5.5 | | | | .5 | | .5 | | | | 68.5 | 9.0 |
| Sections of the Country | 17 | 57.0 | 2.5 | | | | .5 | | | | | | 60.5 | 53.0 |
| Name of Place | 21 | 16.0 | 2.5 | 1.0 | | | | | | | | | 19.5 | |
| Titles | 25 | 14.0 | 39 | | | .5 | 6.0 | | | 15 | | | 60.0 | 22.5 |
| Small Letters | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Common Nouns | 5 | 25.0 | 47.0 | | | 3.0 | 7.0 | | 15 | 15 | 1.0 | | 84.0 | |
| | 12 | 34.5 | 17.0 | 5.5 | | 2.0 | .5 | | .5 | .5 | 2.0 | | 62.5 | |

The general error with regard to capitals was to mark the sentences correct; consequently there is almost no way of telling whether the students had any of these usages confused with others. This may mean that they just do not know when and when not to capitalize. This lack of knowledge may be due to either of two things or to both of them. Teachers may have thought students had mastered capitalization in the grades and consequently did not stress itin high school. They may be affected by the general confusion present in the minds of instructors and authorities. It is true that we have been given rules for certain particular usages, but sometimes we can find no rule to fit our case. Sometimes it is proper to use a capital for a certain thing, and again it is not. For instance, students are taught not to capitalize the names of the subjects studied unless they are derived from proper names; yet when a department is spoken of as a particular department in the school or as an organization of some dignity, most authorities say capitalize the word and the name of the subject used with it. Naturally this confuses children.

Another factor that may influence students is the advice to use capitals for clearness and emphasis.[1] The practice places students in the position mentioned in the introduction. They are not hampered by rules, but point according to feeling. This advice should be avoided with high school students for the reasons mentioned before.

Although the sentences in many cases do not reveal a confusion, they do afford us a means of finding out the seat of certain difficulties. Since it is not possible to point out any general tendencies except the one to mark the original correct, it may be well to deal with the sentences one by one and point out the trouble indicated in each. These sentences will be discussed under the heads they were designed to fit.

1. Summey - Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p.p. 164 and 165.

Titles with Proper Names. Sentence 9 contains a title used with a proper name. The title is given with a little letter. It was marked correct by 62 per cent. This would indicate that students did not know when titles should be capitalized and when they should not be. This may be due in part to the texts and manuals used. Three of those consulted have nothing to say about this particular rule. Three[1] of them, however, give advice on this subject in particular. These all agree. One[2] of these even states what to do with a prefix before the title. He says it should never be capitalized unless it comes at the beginning of the sentence.

The only other response made a sufficient number of times was the one indicating that the sentence needed one comma. Only 5.5 per cent made this response. Those who did so probably considered the name of the man in opposition with his title; for this usage here would require only one comma, as the name ends thesentence.

Sections of the Country. Sentence 17 was missed by 60.5 per cent of the students. It contains a reference to a section of the country. Over half of the students, or 57 per cent, marked the sentence correct. In fact no other response was made often enough to warrant a study of it being made. The difficulty here may have arisen from one or the other of two causes. Students may not have known that capitals should be used here, or they may not have been able to distinguish between the employment of the words, "east," "west," etc., as sections and as directions. The rules may be at fault if the latter case caused the error. Three authorities do not mention it. Two[3] others discuss the use of capitals with sections of the country, but

1. O'Rourke Self-Aids, 1927 edition, p. 166
   Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 300
   Woolley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 305
2. Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 302
3. Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 310
   Woolley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 263

they do not contrast this usage with the employment of a small letter for direction. One,[1] however, makes the case very clear.

Proper Names. As might be expected, this sentence caused little difficulty. Only 19.5 per cent missed it, and 16 per cent of these marked it correct, Those who missed probably were confused by the term "State of Ohio" being used. If only the name of the state had been given, the error probably would have been very much smaller.

Titles. Sentence 25 did not reveal much concerning the students' knowledge of capitals. A few of the students thought the sentence correct. These were probably mislead by the fact that some of the letters in the title were capitalized, or by the varying statements concerning capitalization of titles. Two[2] authorities advise the capitalizing of the important words in a title. This advice is vague. What are the important words? Opinion may vary. O'Rourke,[3] however, is very definite in the wording of his rules. He says that articles, prepositions, and conjunctions are not important and should not be capitalized.

The most popular response, the one made by 39 per cent of the students, indicates that some of them considered the title a quotation. Another group represented by 6 per cent also considered the title the quoted words of some one. These, however, must have considered the quotation formal, for they chose the use of the ~~semi~~colon.

1. O'Rourke Self-Aids, 1927 edition, p. 165
2. Ball Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 308
   Woolley and Scott College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 262
3. O'Rourke Self-Aids, 1927 edition, p. 165

Incorrect Use of Capitals with Common Nouns. Sentence 5 is typical of sentences used by students. It contains the names of several subjects taught in school. All the names are capitalized; whereas only the one derived from a proper noun should have been. Of those tested 25 per cent marked the sentence correct. The greatest tendency, however, was to use one comma. This usage was preferred by 47 per cent. These evidently overlooked the real error because they considered the first phrase an introductory one, and thought that supposed error the one in the sentence, or they did not consider that use of the capital incorrect.

An other error in the use of capitals appears in sentence 12. The word "high school" is used in a general sense. In the sentence it is capitalized. The students should have indicated the necessity for a small letter, but 34.5 per cent of them marked it correct. They evidently confused this general term with the case in which the words are connected with a particular name. Another error was made by 17.5. This indicated a tendency to use a comma. Still others wished to use two commas. These students were evidently setting off some element they considered non-restrective.

# CHAPTER VIII

## Recommendations

### The Teaching of Sentence Sense

The large number of errors made in punctuating compound sentences when the elements were not connected by a conjunction would indicate that a great number of students do not have correct "sentence-sense." Many used only a comma in such sentences. Failure to recognize a sentence will also cause a student to follow a phrase or clause with a period. This misunderstanding of what a sentence is is a condition prevalent everywhere. Ward[1] tells of an experiment made in the colleges in Indiana. Here the institutions made a concerted effort to find out how many entering the freshman class could differentiate between a phrase, a clause, and a sentence. Barely fifty per cent could do this. Ward[2] also gives the results of an investigation to which members of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English submitted themselves. Many of these teachers failed to make satisfactory scores.

Trying to teach punctuation to students who do not possess "sentence-sense" is like groping in the dark. It is an unnecessary waste of time. Every teacher who expects results from her teaching should save herself and her pupils much valuable time and endless discouragement by first ascertaining whether her pupils have the ability to recognize sentences.

1. Ward "What Is English?", 1925 edition, pp. 127 and 128.
2. Ibid

If they do not, she should defer the teaching of pointing and turn her attention to sentence training. How shall she do this? There is only one way to teach sentence sense and that is by teaching grammar. Numbers of people discourage this practice; but, as Ward says, no child will ever be able to distinguish between phrases, clauses, and sentences until he knows the parts of speech which make them up and the combinations of these which go to make up the bigger function groups. In order to teach punctuation effectively teach grammar.

## Necessity for Understanding Terms

After a teacher has made sure her students have "sentence-sense," she should determine, as she teaches punctuation, whether or not the pupils understand the terms used in quoting the rules. This investigation revealed the fact that many terms were misunderstood. Many pupils evidently did not understand that the term "set-off" meant use punctuation on both sides of the section involved. This term is a good one and expresses the exact meaning. If the attention of the child is called to its real import, it can not be improved upon.

The term "non-restrictive" caused difficulty. If clauses are to be punctuated correctly, it is necessary that this term or an equivalent, be perfectly understood. With phrases it is not so important as it is with clauses, for the tendency to omit punctuation with certain phrases is growing. It is difficult to explain the term in words. Examples make the meaning clear. The teacher can, however, tell a child that the term means that the information contained in the clause can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence. She should then illustrate her point. Two sentences should make the principle clear. For instance,

she might use "The water, which was beautiful and sparkling, lapped the side of the boat." The omission of the relative clause here would not change the meaning of the sentence. If, however, she used "Water that is stagnant isnot good for drinking purposes", the omission of the clause would create an untrue statement. Phrases should be approached from another angle. Since numbers of phrases need not be set off, pupils should ask themselves whether or not omission of the marks of punctuation would cause misreading. If it does not, the phrase generally does not need punctuation.

## Caution in Regard to New Practice.

Again it is necessary to call attention to Pope's advice. We should not be the first by whom new principles are tried. The necessity for this discussion arises from that fact that certain old principles in punctuation are being vigorously attacked, but no consistent usage has been accepted in the place of the old. This investigation revealed that such a condition existed in regard to such terms as "namely," "viz," "i.e.," etc. A discussion of the various principles advocated for punctuating these terms was given under the head of the semicolon. Until there is at least some partial agreement among authorities, it will be best to follow the old form of using the semicolon before such terms and comma after.

## Necessity for Definiteness.

The fact that some rules allow a student too much liberty caused some errors. Particularly is this true of rules concerning the compound sentence. Length is allowed to determine the use of marks. How can a child tell when a sentence ceases to be short and becomes long?

Or how can a mature writer determine this? Of course certain sentences will be called long by all, and others will be called short. They constitute the extreme sentences, but what of the borderline sentences? People will necessarily vary in their opinions. Students need definite rules. Too much liberty prevents the forming of proper consistent practices.

There is a lack of definiteness in regard to names for connectives and as to what connectives fall in each class. The term "co-ordinating" is a familiar one and is used by practically all authorities, but it is often preceded by such terms as "simple," "grammatical," or "logical." Such terms are not necessary if the particular conjunctions used in certain cases can be agreed upon. This agreement can be made in regard to those conjunctions which may be preceded by a comma when their function is the joining of the elements of a compound sentence. As Summey[1] names five, we may start with his list. He names "and", "but", "or", "for", and "nor". All[2] of these are used by one or more of the other authorities. Since these authorities were selected for their merit and as each of the connectives mentioned appears more than once in the compilation, we may say that good usage would sanction them as the connectives to be used with the comma between the independent elements of a compound sentence when there is no internal punctuation.

1. Summey — Modern Punctuation, 1919 edition, p. 76
2. Lewis and Hosic — New Practical English for High Schools, 1927 edition, p. 52
   Ward — Theme-Building, 1924 edition, p. 512
   Ball — Constructive English, 1923 edition, p. 317
   Woolley and Scott — College Handbook of Composition, 1928 edition, p. 190
   O'Rourke — Self-Aids, 1927 edition, p. 169

## Restating of Rules

Many of the sentences indicate that a lack of clearness in the stating of the rules is responsible for the error. In view of this fact this paper in closing will seek to set forth a clear statement of each of the rules involved in this test. The test does not contain examples of all the rules for punctuation; consequently the statements given will not cover the entire field.

## The Comma

It has been said that the term "set off" is a very expressive one if its meaning is clearly understood. The following suggestions are offered with the supposition that this term will be properly explained.

1. Use a comma to set off:

   a. Words in apposition unless they come at the end of the sentence. In that case a comma precedes the expression and a period follows it.

   b. 2 items in a date.

   ~~b.~~ The last item is followed by a comma unless it ends the sentence. It is then followed by a period.

   c. The items in an address. The last item is followed by a comma unless it is the end of a sentence. Then it is followed by one of the marks of end punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).

   ~~d.~~ Words in direct address. If the word in direct address closes the statement it is followed by a mark of end punctuation.

   e. A non-restrictive clause, (one that presents an additional thought and could be omitted without changing the meaning). Any clause following a proper noun is non-restrictive and

should be set off.

f. Non-restrictive phrases (phrases that give additional information).

g. Parenthetical expressions (statements thrown in).

2. Use a comma to separate:

a. The members of a compound sentence joined by "and", "but", "or", "for", and "nor".

b. Words in a series. Always place a comma before the conjunction preceding the last item.

3. Use a comma after :

a. Introductory adverb clauses.

b. Introductory phrases except prepositional ones. Do not set these off unless the sentence is confusing without such punctutation.

4. Use a comma before an informal direct quotation. The comma precedes the quotation marks.

## Semicolon

1. Use a semicolon between the main clauses of a compound sentence when no conjunction is expressed.
2. Use a semicolon between the main clauses of a compound sentence joined by a conjunction unless that conjunction is one of the following: "and," "but," "or," "nor," or "for." If one of these is expressed, use a comma instead of a semicolon.
3. Use a semicolon before and a comma after "namely," "that is," "viz," "i.e.," and "e.g." when they introduce examples.

## Colon

1. Use a colon before a list of items or an enumeration.
2. Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter.

## Quotation Marks

1. Use quotation marks to inclose the direct words of a speaker. Be sure that the statement contains the direct words of another, for indirect quotations are never inclosed.
2. Use quotation marks to inclose the quoted title of a book, a poem, a theme, or any other work.

## Apostrophe

1. Use an apostrophe and "s" to indicate the possessive case of a singular noun.
2. Use an apostrophe and "s" to indicate the possessive case of plural nouns not ending in "s".
3. Use only the apostrophe after the possessive case of a plural noun ending in "s."
4. Use an apostrophe to show the omission of letters in a contraction.
5. Use an apostrophe and the letter "s" to indicate the plural of letters, numbers, and symbols.

## Hyphen

1. Use a hyphen between the elements of a compound word.
2. Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line. Be sure that the hyphen is placed between syllables.

## Capitalization

1. Capitalize all titles used with proper nouns. The prefix "ex" with a capitalized title ~~still~~ is introduced by a small letter.
2. Capitalize "North", "South", "East", and "West" when they refer to sections of the country. Write them with small letters if they denote direction.

   Ex. His home is in the West.
   He lives west of here.

3. Capitalize all proper names (those denoting a particular person, place, or thing).

   Ex. He goes to high school.
   He goes to Salem High School.

4. Capitalize the important words in a title. All words except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles are classed as important.
5. Do not capitalize the names of the seasons.
6. Do not capitalize names of school subjects unless they are derived from proper names.

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